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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CULTIVATES TIES WITH YOUNG FDP LEADERS

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission John Koenig for Reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Ambassador Timken and senior embassy officers hosted a dinner for eight young up-and-coming Free Democrat (FDP) federal parliamentarians January 23 in order to foster a working relationship and discuss policy issues of mutual interest. Born from a recent meeting between the Ambassador and FDP Chairman Guido Westerwelle, the dinner helped advance relations with parliamentarians who will likely enjoy long careers in a party that has a good chance of entering the federal government after the 2009 national elections. Discussion revolved around U.S. domestic politics, as well as Iraq, German domestic security, foreign military deployments, and data and privacy protection. Ambassador Timken plans to host a series of such engagements over the coming year with leaders and parliamentarians of other major parties. End summary.

Pro-American and Interested in U.S.

¶2. (C) The FDP parliamentarians ranged from 28 to 44 years of age. All of them appeared generally pro-U.S. and enthusiastic about cultivating a relationship with the Embassy. DCM, Pol MC, Econ MC, and Poloff joined the Ambassador at the event.

¶3. (C) One of the guests, Otto Fricke, is currently chairman of the parliament's budget committee -- as well as a big fan of American baseball -- and could well become the FDP's top budget official in a future government. Guests were particularly interested in the current election season in the U.S. and how the results could affect U.S. foreign policy and, in particular, U.S. demands for additional German resources in foreign military deployments. Several guests stated that, although the German political class understands the need for German military engagement abroad, most of the German public does not sense this urgency. In answer to the Ambassador's reference to SPD caucus leader (and former defense minister) Peter Struck's famous statement that "Germany's security is defended at the Hindu Kush," parliamentarian Gisela Piltz countered that most Germans do not believe that an attack on Germany would emanate from Afghanistan. Others added that Germany's post-WWII pacifist tradition would continue to hamstring consideration of additional deployments abroad.

Potential Coalition Partners

14. (C) The FDP bills itself openly today as the Christian Democratic Union's (CDU) natural ideological partner. In the past, the FDP has joined both the CDU and the SPD in federal government, usually running the foreign ministry. The CDU hopes, after the scheduled parliamentary elections in 2009, to leave its governing Grand Coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD) and govern by itself or in partnership with the FDP. If the FDP enters government, party chairman Westerwelle will likely become foreign minister and FDP parliament members will have an increased voice in foreign affairs. The eight FDP parliamentarians in attendance were personally identified by Westerwelle as promising politicians who will likely have long and influential careers in the German government. For this reason, we hope that a relationship-building investment in such parliamentarians will pay off as we promote U.S. policies.

COMMENT: Leveraging the Affinity

15. (C) The FDP has a natural affinity for a wide range of U.S. values and policy priorities that we should continue to leverage. Although the FDP has a mixed record on supporting overseas military deployments -- it has criticized deployments to Lebanon, but is increasingly supportive of efforts in Afghanistan -- it emphasizes entrepreneurship, the private sector's role in job creation, open trade and investment, practical approaches to climate change, and low taxation. The party is also skeptical about our methods in the global struggle against terrorism; it consistently decries alleged restrictions on personal liberties and intrusions into privacy by the U.S. and German governments. The Ambassador plans to deepen the Embassy's relationship with FDP leaders, including party chairman Westerwelle, over

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the coming year, while also continuing a major series of outreach activities to other political parties. End comment.
TIMKEN JR